

Medical Resources Home Health What to Expect About Knee Surgery

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Total knee replacement is one of the most successful operations in providing relief and returning patients to a normal, productive life. Over the past 40 years, million of patients in the U.S. have benefited from this procedure and as people live longer and younger patients require better function, the demand for knee replacements is growing strongly. Current data estimate knee replacements surgery is performed on 600,000 patients each year with projected growth to 3.5 million patients per year by 2030. There are many highly qualified orthopedic surgeons who can perform this surgery located in Massachusetts.

What is Knee Replacement Surgery?

Knee replacement surgery is a procedure in which damaged bone and cartilage from the thighbone, shinbone and kneecap caused by osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis are removed and replaced with an artificial joint made of metal alloys, high grade plastics and polymers. This is done to relieve pain, increase mobility and overall quality of life.

What are the signs to suggest you may be a good candidate for knee replacement surgery?

There are a number of signs that suggest you may be ready for knee replacement surgery. Some signs include:

- You have knee pain that keeps you awake, or awakens you at night
- You experience moderate or severe knee pain at rest
- You have knee pain which limits activities necessary to go about your daily routine (such as getting up from a chair or climbing stairs)
- You have knee pain that limits activities that give you pleasure (such as walking for exercise, traveling or shopping)
- You have tried other treatments for a reasonable period of time, and you still have persistent knee pain. This might include weight loss, physical therapy, a cane or other walking aid, medications, and braces
- You have a knee deformity such as a knee that bows in or out

On the other hand, there are several equally important signs that suggest you are not ready for knee replacement, including:

- Your knee pain does not limit normal activities
- Your symptoms are improving with more conservative treatments
- You have not tried more conservative treatments
- You are only limited from performing strenuous activities like running or skiing

Years ago doctors believed that knee replacement surgery was primarily for an older audience – and while the surgery is typically performed in adults aged 55+, the surgery may be considered for adults of all ages. Young, physically active people are more likely to wear out their new knees prematurely.

Preparing for Surgery

An orthopedic surgeon – a doctor who treats muscle and bone problems – performs knee replacement surgery. Before the procedure, the surgeon takes your medical history and performs a physical examination to assess your knee's range of motion, stability and strength. You'll also have an e-ray exam to determine the extent of knee damage.

Knee replacement surgery requires anesthesia to make you comfortable during surgery. Your input and personal preference helps the team decide whether to use general anesthesia, which renders you unconscious during the operation, or spinal or epidural anesthesia, during which you are awake but can't feel any pain from your waist down.

Your doctor may advise you to stop taking certain medications and dietary supplements before your surgery. You'll probably be instructed not to eat anything after midnight before your surgery.

It's always good to know what to avoid so you can speed up your recovery following surgery. Things you can prepare ahead of time before you actually have the surgery include:

- Arranging for someone to help you for a week or two after coming out of the hospital.
- A firm, straight-back chair is helpful and recommended along with a footstool to elevate your leg. Avoid recliners.
- Consider changing rooms to avoid stairs, if possible. At a minimum, make arrangements so that you only have to go up and down stairs once or twice a day.
- Install safety bars or a secure handrail in your shower or bath.
- Secure handrails along your stairways.
- To help avoid falls, remove loose rugs and other loose items from the floor and rearrange furniture so you can get about on a walker, crutches or cane.
- "Enthusiastic" pets should be kept out of harms way.

What Should I Expect After Surgery

After surgery you're taken to a recovery room for several hours. You're then moved to your hospital room, where you typically stay for a couple of days before going home. You may feel some pain, nerve blocks and medications prescribed by your doctor will help control it.

Having your doctor prescribe in home care for a week or two once you return home has been shown to help speed your recovery. The Medical Resources Home Health team, including our nursing, physical therapy, occupational therapy and home health aides are especially trained to help the post surgical needs of patients following knee replacement surgery. Your physical activity program will include:

- A gradual walking program – first indoors, then outdoors – to gradually increase your mobility
- Slowly resuming other normal household activities, including walking up and down stairs
- Knee-strengthening exercises you learned from the hospital physical therapist, performed several times a day

Our goal at Medical Resources Home Health is to enable patients to step back into their lives with the greatest degree of freedom and independence.